

Handout 3: Following Your Ancestors Through U.S. Military Records: An Introduction

**8 June 2022, Bill Barrett
Edgewood Family History Center**

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A. U.S. Military Records Class Handout

https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/U.S._Military_Records_Class_Handout

B. U.S. Military Basic Search Strategies

https://familysearch.org/wiki/en/US_Military_Basic_Search_Strategies

See NARA Military Records for “Genealogy Research in Military Records: How can Military Records help in my genealogy research?” <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/genealogy>

C. Links to Military Record Training Videos

The Family History Guide: Articles and videos from several websites, including Ancestry, FamilySearch, Fold3, and many other websites.

<https://www.thefhguide.com/project-9-united-statesel.html#goal-e1>

Fold3.com: Extremely good series of military record videos.

<https://www.ancestry.com/academy/course/military-vets-fold3>

D. NARA: An Overview of Records at the National Archives Relating to Military Service

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2002/fall/military-records-overview.html>

NARA: Standard Form 180—Request Pertaining to Military Records (not prior to WWI)
<https://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/standard-form-180.html>

PDFs of the following forms are at the end of this handout:

- NATF Form 85—Order for Copies of Federal Pension or Bounty Land Warrant Applications
- NATF Form 86—Order for Copies of Records of Military Service completed prior to WWI

E. U.S. Military Structure Chart

https://www.vetfriends.com/resources/us_military_structure_chart.cfm?funnel=SB#prettyPhoto

F. U.S. Military Rank Insignia

<https://www.defense.gov/Resources/Insignia/>

G. Ancestry.com: 5 Military Favorites

<https://www.ancestrycdn.com/support/us/2016/11/5militaryfavorites.pdf>

H. Ancestry.com: Tips for Success with Military Records

<https://www.ancestrycdn.com/legacy/offer/us/family/vetsdayresearch.pdf>

I. AncestryAcademy.com: Helpful Military Record Links

National Archives in Washington, DC
700 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20408

<http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/>

Available records: Pre-World War I Army and Navy Records, Pension Files, Service Records, etc.

National Archives at College Park, MD
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740-6001

<http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/>

Available records: Still Pictures, Motion Pictures, Naval Records from WWII, Army Records from WWI, etc.

National Archives at St Louis, MO
1 Archives Drive
St Louis, MO 63138

<http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/>

Available records: Official Military Personnel Files (OMPF), Morning Reports, Unit Rosters, etc.

To request a Military Service Record from National Archives at St Louis:

<http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/index.html>

To request a Compiled Military Service Record, Bounty Land, or Pension File:

<http://www.archives.gov/research/order/>

U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center

950 Soldiers Drive

Carlisle, PA 17013-5021

<http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ahec/index.cfm>

U.S. Army Center of Military History

102 4th Avenue, Building 35

Fort McNair, DC 20319-5060

<http://www.history.army.mil/>

Naval History and Heritage Command

805 Kidder Breese Street SE

Washington Navy Yard, DC 20374-5060

<http://www.history.navy.mil/>

J. DAR: Daughters of the American Revolution

<https://www.dar.org/>

The Daughters of the American Revolution is a nonprofit, nonpolitical, volunteer women's service organization dedicated to promoting historic preservation, education, and patriotism.

Founded: October 11, 1890; incorporated in 1896 by an Act of Congress

We are the only such origination that reports annually to Congress!

Our Motto: God, Home, and Country

Membership: We are not only in the United States, but have international chapters in many countries.

DAR Library in DC: Has one of the largest genealogical research centers in the United States. A specialized collection of American genealogical and historical manuscripts and publications.

Lineage Research: In addition to chapter registrars that do lineage research we have a separate Lineage Research committee dedicated to genealogy research to assist prospective members and hold workshops.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES (NARA) ORDER FOR COPIES OF FEDERAL PENSION OR BOUNTY LAND WARRANT APPLICATIONS

Expedite your order; submit it online at

eservices.archives.gov/orderonline

We receive orders more quickly when you submit them online. We will send you an e-mail confirming that we have your request and you will be able to track the order online at no additional cost.

Order reproduction service using this form is available **ONLY** from *Archival Operations Washington D.C., Form 85 – Pension, National Archives and Records Administration, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20408-0001.*

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORDER

The success of our search depends on the completeness and accuracy of the information you provide in blocks 2-17 on this form. Often there are many files for veterans of the same or nearly the same name. If there are three or fewer files for men with the same name as the individual in whom you are interested, we will examine the relevant files and compare their contents with the information that you have provided us. If the veteran's identity seems obvious, we will furnish you a copy of the file we think is the correct one. Please note that each NATF Form 85 is handled separately.

We cannot make a file-by-file check to see if the information in the numerous files matches that provided for the veteran in whom you are interested. In such cases, we suggest that you visit the National Archives and examine the various files, or hire a professional researcher to examine the files for you. We do not maintain a list of persons who do research for a fee; however, many researchers advertise their services in genealogical periodicals, usually available in libraries.

USE NATF FORM 86 TO OBTAIN COPIES OF MILITARY SERVICE RECORDS.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM

Use a separate NATF Form 85 for each file that you request. You must complete blocks 1 – 6 or we cannot search for the file. Print your name (last, first, MI) and address in the box provided at the bottom of the form. This serves as your mailing label. **We destroy requests without return addresses.** Please enter the Card Validation Code, found on your card, in the space provided on the form (three or four digits). We will make reproductions of records that relate to your request. We accept Master Card, VISA, American Express, and Discover credit cards. Do NOT send cash or check. Forms with incomplete Credit Card information will be destroyed. **Make a copy of the completed form for your records.** Mail it to: *Archival Operations Washington D.C., Form 85 – Pension, National Archives and Records Administration, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20408-0001.* Please allow up to 90 days for processing your order. If you provide your email address, we will send you an email with your order number. You can track the status of your order at our website, eservices.archives.gov/orderonline. We cannot provide digital certifications.

RETURN POLICY: Due to various factors, it is occasionally difficult for NARA to make a legible reproduction. NARA will notify customers and ask for approval to proceed if we anticipate a reproduction of questionable legibility. As a result, NARA does not provide refunds except in special cases. If a customer requests a refund, we review the order to determine if we properly notified the customer of the questionable nature of the original and if the product is a true representation of the original. If the product is a true representation of the original, we will not issue a refund. If you feel we processed your order incorrectly or it contains errors, please contact us within 30 days of your delivery date to have your issue verified. Once we verify the issue, we will correct the error and resend the documents. If we cannot correct the error, you will receive a refund.

ELECTRONIC TRANSFER: Electronic transfer allows you to download your files from a site, as opposed to having them mailed to you. You will be sent a link for the download. Click the link and download the file to a location of your choosing. Download speeds will vary based upon file size and your internet connection. A valid email address is necessary for electronic transfer. Total file transfers can be up to 5 GB. However, files of that size are typically separated into multiple, smaller files. Files will be available for 30 days from date of upload; downloads of the files should take place within that period. To ensure electronic receipt of your order, please add electronic.delivery@nara.gov to your trusted senders list. In some cases, certain email applications will move your reproduction orders to your spam box. Please monitor your spam box while awaiting your order.

TYPES OF RECORDS THAT CAN BE ORDERED WITH THIS FORM

FEDERAL PENSION APPLICATION FILES

Full Pension Application File - Civil War (1860) and Later, (\$80 up to 100 pages + \$.70 per additional page); Pre Civil War (\$55):

Pension application files generally are most useful to those who are doing genealogical research and contain the most complete information regarding a soldier's military career. We suggest that you first request reproductions of a soldier's pension file. You should request reproductions of a bounty-land warrant file or a military record only when no pension file exists. If the veteran's service was during the Revolutionary War, bounty-land warrant applications have been consolidated with pension application papers. You can obtain both files by requesting the pension file only. Military service records rarely contain family information. Use NATF Form 86 to obtain reproductions of military service records.

Pension application files, based on Federal (not State or Confederate) service before World War I, usually include an official statement of the veteran's military service, as well as information of a personal nature. **Pension files for the Civil War and later can be very large and average more pages than pension files for previous wars so the National Archives Trust Fund sets a page limit on these items. If the file requested exceeds the page limit the researcher will receive the first block of pages along with a quote for the remaining pages. The customer must return the quote with payment to receive the remainder of the file.** Pensions based on military service for the Confederate States of America were authorized by some Southern States but not by the Federal Government until 1959. Inquiries about State pensions should be addressed to the State archives or equivalent agency at the capital of the veteran's State of residence after the war. See the special notes below about Confederate pensions.

Pension Documents Packet (\$30): The pension documents package will contain, to the extent that these documents are present in the file, 8 documents that contain genealogical information about the pension applicant. Not all of these documents will be found in every file. The package will include any of the following items that are in the file: (1) declaration of pension, (2) declaration of widow's pension, (3) Adjutant General statements of service, (4) questionnaires completed by applicants (numbered forms), (5) "Pension Dropped" cards, (6) marriage certificates, (7) death certificates, (8) discharge certificate. We will not provide a count of the remaining pages; if you wish to obtain a full pension file after reviewing the pension documents packet, you will need to order the complete file. If the entire pension file is no more than 10 pages, we will mark the order "Complete file provided."

BOUNTY-LAND WARRANT APPLICATION FILES

Bounty-land warrant application files (\$30) are based on Federal (not State) service before 1856. Documents in a bounty-land warrant application file are similar to those in a pension application file. In addition, these files usually give the veteran's age and place of residence at the time the application was made. For a copy of the surrendered Bounty-Land Warrant, you will need to submit a request on NATF Form 84, National Archives Order for Copies of Land Entry Files.

SPECIAL NOTES ABOUT CONFEDERATE PENSIONS

The following Southern State Archives have Confederate pension records. For links to State Archives websites and links to online finding aids please go to the Confederate pension page on our website at www.archives.gov or you can write to the addresses below for more information.

Alabama Department of Archives & History, 624 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104

Arkansas History Commission & State Archives, One Capitol Mall, Little Rock, AR 72201

Florida State Archives, R.A. Gray Building, 500 South Bronough Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250

Georgia Department of Archives & History, 5800 Jonesboro Road, Morrow, GA 30260

Kentucky Department for Libraries & Archives, Kentucky State Archives, 300 Coffee Tree Road, Frankfort, KY 40601

Louisiana State Archives, 3851 Essen Lane, Baton Rouge, LA 70809-2137

Mississippi Department of Archives & History, Charlotte Capers Building, 100 South State Street, Jackson, MS 39201

Missouri State Archives, State Information Center, 600 West Main Street, Jefferson City, MO 65101

North Carolina State Archives, 109 East Jones Street, Raleigh, NC 27601

Oklahoma Department of Libraries, State Archives, 200 N.E. 18th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73105

South Carolina Department of Archives & History, South Carolina History Center, 8301 Parklane Road, Columbia, SC 29223

Tennessee State Library & Archives, 403 Seventh Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37243

Texas State Library & Archives Commission, 1201 Brazos Street, Austin, TX 78711-2927

The Library of **Virginia**, 800 East Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23219-8000

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Collection of this information is authorized by sections 2108, 2116, and 2307 of Title 44 U.S. Code. Disclosure of the information is voluntary; however, we will be unable to respond to your request if you do not furnish your name and address and the minimum required information about the records. The information is used by NARA employees to search for the record; to respond to you; to maintain control over information requests received and answered; and to facilitate preparation of internal statistical reports. If you provide credit card information, that information is used to bill you for copies.

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENT

A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a current valid OMB control number. The OMB Control No. for this information collection is 3095-0027. Public burden reporting for this collection of information is estimated to be 10 minutes per response. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of the information collection, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to National Archives and Records Administration (ISP), 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park MD 20740. DO NOT SEND COMPLETED FORMS TO THIS ADDRESS. SEND COMPLETED FORMS TO THE ADDRESS INDICATED IN THE FORM INSTRUCTIONS.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES (NARA) ORDER FOR COPIES OF MILITARY SERVICE RECORDS**Expedite your order; submit it online at****eservices.archives.gov/orderonline*****We receive orders more quickly when you submit them online.*** We will send you an e-mail confirming that we have your request and you will be able to track the order online at no additional cost.Order reproduction service by using this form is available **ONLY** from *Archival Operations Washington D.C., Form 86 – Military, National Archives and Records Administration, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20408-0001*. For more information, please write to us at the address above.**IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR ORDER**DO NOT use this form for any request relating to post-1912 military service in World War I or II, or subsequent service. Write to: *National Personnel Records Center, 1 Archives Drive, St. Louis, MO 63138*.For additional information about these later records, visit eVetrecs at www.archives.gov/veterans.

Military service records rarely contain family information. Federal pension files may be requested on NATF Form 85. Pension application files generally are most useful to those who are doing genealogical research and contain the most complete information regarding a soldier's military career. We suggest that you first request copies of a soldier's pension file. You should request copies of a bounty-land warrant file or a military record only when no pension file exists. If the veteran's service was during the Revolutionary War, bounty-land warrant applications have been consolidated with pension application papers. You can obtain both files by requesting the pension file only. We will copy complete compiled military service and bounty-land application files. More information about the availability of records pertaining to military service or family histories may be found in our free genealogical information leaflets and forms. You may request these, as well as order additional copies of this form, online at www.archives.gov/contact or by writing to: *Archival Operations Washington D.C., Form 86 – Military, National Archives and Records Administration, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20408-0001*. Electronic versions of this and other forms are available on the NARA website, www.archives.gov.

The success of our search depends on the completeness and accuracy of the information you provide in blocks 1-13 on this form. Please note that each NATF Form 86 is handled separately. When you send more than one form at a time, you may not receive all of your replies at the same time.

**USE NATF FORM 85 TO OBTAIN COPIES OF
FEDERAL PENSION AND BOUNTY LAND WARRANT APPLICATIONS****INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THIS FORM**

Use a separate NATF Form 86 for each file that you request. You must complete blocks 1 – 6 or we cannot search for the file. Print your name (last, first, MI) and address in the box provided at the bottom of the form. This serves as your mailing label. **We destroy requests without return addresses.** Please enter the Card Validation Code, found on your card, in the space provided on the form (three or four digits). We will make reproductions of records that relate to your request. We accept Master Card, VISA, American Express, and Discover credit cards. Do NOT send cash or check. Forms with incomplete Credit Card information will be destroyed. **Make a copy of the completed form for your records.** Mail it to: *Archival Operations Washington D.C., Form 86 – Military, National Archives and Records Administration, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20408-0001*. Please allow up to 90 days for processing your order. If you provide your email address, we will send you an email with your order number. You can track the status of your order at our website, eservices.archives.gov/orderonline. Do not use this form to request certified copies of records. To request certified copies contact us at www.archives.gov/contact or write to the above address. We cannot provide digital certifications.

TYPES OF RECORDS THAT CAN BE ORDERED WITH THIS FORM

ARMY SERVICE RECORDS

Military service records are based on service in the UNITED STATES ARMY (officers who served before June 30, 1917, and enlisted men who served before October 31, 1912) and CONFEDERATE ARMED FORCES (officers and enlisted men, 1861-65). In addition to persons who served in regular forces raised by the Federal Government, volunteers fought in various wars chiefly in the Federal Government's interest from the Revolutionary War through the Philippine Insurrection, 1775-1902.

Compilations of information concerning Army service in volunteer organizations during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are available. Such records were not compiled for Regular Army officers who served before 1863 and for Regular Army enlisted men who served during most of the nineteenth century. Records pertaining to that service tend to be limited. We will copy those records which pertain to the soldier in question that can be retrieved by name. This will not represent all of the information scattered among a variety of records. We are not able to undertake the research required to locate all such documents.

The record of an individual's service in any one organization is entirely separate from his record of service in another organization. We are unable to establish accurately the identity of individuals of the same name who served in different organizations. If you know that an individual served in more than one organization and you desire copies of all of the military service records, submit a separate form for the service record in each organization.

Discharge certificates are not usually included as a part of a compiled military service record. Before 1944, Army regulations allowed the preparation of an original discharge certificate only, which was given to the soldier. Confederate soldiers in service at the time of surrender did not receive discharge certificates. They were given paroles, and these paroles became the property of the soldier.

NAVY OR MARINE CORPS SERVICE RECORDS

There are no compiled service records for Navy or Marine Corps personnel. Do not use this form to obtain information about obtaining reproductions of records relating to Navy or Marine Corps service. You may obtain information by contacting us online at www.archives.gov/contact or by writing to *Archival Operations Washington D.C., Form 86 – Military, National Archives and Records Administration, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20408-0001*.

RETURN POLICY: Due to various factors, it is occasionally difficult for NARA to make a legible reproduction. NARA will notify customers and ask for approval to proceed if we anticipate a reproduction of questionable legibility. As a result, NARA does not provide refunds except in special cases. If a customer requests a refund, we review the order to determine if we properly notified the customer of the questionable nature of the original and if the product is a true representation of the original. If the product is a true representation of the original, we will not issue a refund. If you feel we processed your order incorrectly or it contains errors, please contact us within 30 days of your delivery date to have your issue verified. Once we verify the issue, we will correct the error and resend the documents. If we cannot correct the error, you will receive a refund.

ELECTRONIC TRANSFER: Electronic transfer allows you to download your files from a site, as opposed to having them mailed to you. You will be sent a link for the download. Click the link and download the file to a location of your choosing. Download speeds will vary based upon file size and your internet connection. A valid email address is necessary for electronic transfer. Total file transfers can be up to 5 GB. However, files of that size are typically separated into multiple, smaller files. Files will be available for 30 days from date of upload; downloads of the files should take place within that period. To ensure electronic receipt of your order, please add electronic.delivery@nara.gov to your trusted senders list. In some cases, certain email applications will move your reproduction orders to your spam box. Please monitor your spam box while awaiting your order.

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

Collection of this information is authorized by sections 2108, 2116, and 2307 of Title 44 U.S. Code. Disclosure of the information is voluntary; however, we will be unable to respond to your request if you do not furnish your name and address and the minimum required information about the records. The information is used by NARA employees to search for the record; to respond to you; to maintain control over information requests received and answered; and to facilitate preparation of internal statistical reports. If you provide credit card information, that information is used to bill you for copies.

PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT PUBLIC BURDEN STATEMENT

A Federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a current valid OMB control number. The OMB Control No. for this information collection is 3095-0027. Public burden reporting for this collection of information is estimated to be 10 minutes per response. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of the information collection, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to National Archives and Records Administration (ISP), 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park MD 20740. DO NOT SEND COMPLETED FORMS TO THIS ADDRESS. SEND COMPLETED FORMS TO THE ADDRESS INDICATED ON THE FORM ITSELF.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES ORDER FOR COPIES OF MILITARY SERVICE RECORDS*(See Instructions page before completing this form)***If we locate the record you identify below, we will reproduce it for you. The cost for these reproductions is \$30.00.**

Provide your credit card information at the bottom of this page. Orders with incomplete credit card information will not be processed.

DO NOT SEND CASH OR CHECK. There is no charge for an unsuccessful search.**1. Reference Number:****G**

M	M	D	D	Y	Y	#	#

Reference Number: Enter the date you fill out the form (example – MMDDYY = 012319). Enter the number of the request being submitted in the last two boxes. If you are submitting four forms and this is your second, you would enter 02. A completed reference number example is: 01231902.

SECTION A. REQUIRED MINIMUM IDENTIFICATION OF VETERAN - MUST BE COMPLETED OR YOUR ORDER CANNOT BE SERVICED

2. VETERAN (Give last, first, and middle names)

◆ **Please note: ARMY SERVICE ONLY.** See instructions for information about Navy and Marine Corps service.

3. STATE WHICH HE SERVED

4. WAR IN WHICH, OR DATES BETWEEN WHICH, HE SERVED

5. IF SERVICE WAS CIVIL WAR:

6. KIND OF SERVICE

☐ UNION☐ CONFEDERATE☐ VOLUNTEER☐ REGULAR**PLEASE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, IF KNOWN**

7. UNIT IN WHICH HE SERVED (Name of regiment or number, company, etc.)

8. ARM IN WHICH HE SERVED

If other, specify:

9. RANK

☐ INFANTRY☐ CAVALRY☐ ARTILLERY☐ OFFICER☐ ENLISTED

10. DATE OF BIRTH

11. PLACE OF BIRTH (City, County, State, etc.)

12. DATE OF DEATH

13. PLACE OF DEATH (City, County, State, etc.)

Your completed order is available either as a paper reproduction or as .pdf. Delivery of .pdf files can be done via USPS on CD/DVD or through NARA's electronic transfer system. Check one box below for selection*.

☐ Paper Copies ☐ CD/DVD ☐ Electronic Transfer** email address: _____

* If no selection is made, paper copies will be generated; a certified copy cannot be generated of a .pdf

** Download speeds will vary based upon file size and your internet connection. A valid email address is necessary for electronic transfer.

Comments:

SECTION B. THIS SPACE IS FOR OUR REPLY TO YOU**We were unable to search for the file you requested above. No payment is required. Your request is returned because:**

☐ REQUIRED MINIMUM IDENTIFICATION OF VETERAN WAS NOT PROVIDED. Please complete blocks 2 (give full name), 3, 4, 5, and 6 and resubmit your order.

☐ Post-1912 Regular Army service records are housed at the Military Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO. You may be able to obtain information about the military service of the person in which you are interested by completing the Standard form 180, Request Pertaining to Military Records. The Standard Form 180 is available online at www.archives.gov or visit eVetrecs at www.archives.gov/veterans.

☐ See attached forms, leaflets, or information sheets.

SECTION C. CREDIT CARD INFORMATION AND YOUR SHIPPING ADDRESS (REQUIRED)**CREDIT CARD TYPE:** _____*(see Instructions for credit cards we can accept)*

Signature: _____

Exp.
Date: _____Card Validation Code
(See Instructions): _____

Day Time Phone (Required): _____

e-mail Address (Required if available): _____

Shipping Address	Last Name		First Name, MI		Billing Address	Last Name		First Name, MI	
	Street					Street			
	Street					Street			
	City	State	ZIP or Postal Code	Country (if not USA)		City	State	ZIP or Postal Code	